

Research Article

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION AND ENTHRONEMENT OF OBONGS' (PARAMOUNT RULERS) IN AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA: A STUDY OF NSIT UBIUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

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Article History:

Received: 05 July 2026 | **Accepted:** 10 July 2026 | **Published:** 19 July 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21440649>

*** Related declarations are provided in the final section of this article.*

Abstract

The leadership style of the traditional head or Obong was identified as the main force in developing community potentials in Akwa Ibom State (AKS). The Oblong is entrusted with responsibility to mobilize collectively the material and human resources at his disposal towards development of human capital, production of goods and services, and promotion of the well-being of the people in the community. The study investigates traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, AKS. The paper described the duties of the family-head, village-head, clan-head, and para-mount ruler, and the kind of leadership style required to harness community potentials for sustainable community development. The study adopted a qualitative research method with the main objectives of collecting data, describing, and contextually analyzing the data to arrive at inferences. The study results revealed that, there is a significant direct influence between traditional methods of administration and enthronement/selection of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State; non-adherence to traditional laws and frequent political interference impact negatively on traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, AKS; and strict compliance with the native laws,

conventions, customs, and traditions of the people positively influences traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, AKS. It concluded that people of proven integrity should be enthroned to leadership positions such as family-heads, village-heads, clan-heads, and para-mount rulers, and that selection of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) should be based on competence, acceptability, compatibility, and entrepreneurship education, which demonstrate the ability of a leader to mobilize government organizations and community groups for development.

Keywords: Akwa Ibom State, Enthronement, Traditional Method of Administration, Traditional Ruler, Obong (Paramount Ruler)

Introduction

The traditional methods of administration and enthronement of family-heads, village-heads, clan-heads, and para-mount rulers can never be underestimated. The role of traditional – rulers in the development – administration of Akwa Ibom State are outstanding, particularly in peace negotiations, settlement of land disputes, and community development, to mention but a few. The selection and enthronement process of Obongs/Paramount Rulers has been a subject of interest to many researchers, starting from the selection of the family head, to the village head, and to the paramount ruler.

It is the responsibility of the family head, known as “Obong Ekpuk,” to oversee the affairs of the family, a position always selected according to seniority in the family. The oldest person in the family is always selected as the family head. About three to six families can come together to make one “Ekpuk,” and the oldest person among them is selected as the “Ekpuk” head; this marks the beginning of the journey to Village Head, Clan Head, and Paramount Ruler.

Furthermore, Akwa Ibom State has three major distinctive ethnic groups namely: Ibibio, Annang, and Oron, and they have unique custom and tradition of enthronement of the traditional leaders/rulers within the area of their jurisdiction. Therefore, ascending to the throne of traditional leadership in Akwa Ibom is often based on the heredity ancestral background of the person that has been popularly elected, chosen or appointed as a community leader in accordance with the acceptable customarily laws and prescribed rituals of the community (Atakpa et al., 2021; Mbon, 2025).

Mbon (2025) examined the effect of government's interference on traditional leadership and community development in Akwa Ibom State, and found that, issuing certificates of

recognition to traditional leaders by the state government, without following traditional methods of administration, impedes the substance of culture and norms in communities. In another perspective, Umanah et al. (2025a) examined traditional administration and its role in crime prevention. The paper found that traditional administration significantly impacts crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State.

Consequently, Mbon (2025) asserted that traditional leaderships are often guided by the normative rules or principles of the various communities in connection with the consent of the people. On the other way round, decisions on issues bordering or concerning the community are mostly taken into due consultation with the council of elders, and in agreement with councilors representing various sections of the community, particularly in different sectors such as cultural, social, economic and political matters. Hence, the entire process creates a native administrative structure that stimulates a high magnitude of community growth and development within their geographical territory or area of jurisdiction.

The traditional process of enthronement of traditional leaders in Akwa Ibom State, and in Nsit Ubium LGA in particular, helps to select leaders vested with resolute skills that could assist in preventing social vices such as rape, prostitution, armed robbery, kidnapping, human trafficking, cultism among others., and support legality in the communities. On this basis, communities enjoy a relative measure of peace, ethical conduct, articulated interests, and secure economically competitive societies for community development (Mbon, 2025).

Additionally, family heads maintain peace and unity among their members. The family head presides over all family meetings, and when problems become too large for him to handle, he reports the matter to the village head. The village head, in turn, reports difficult situations in his village to the clan head, while the clan head reports more serious problems facing the clan to the paramount ruler of the Local Government; the paramount ruler then reports serious problems facing the Local Government to the State Traditional Rulers Council (TRC).

The study identified that no previous study has been conducted on traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs and Paramount Rulers in Akwa Ibom State. It therefore became necessary to embark on this study to close the gap in the literature, since previous studies by Atakpa et al. (2021), Umanah et al. (2025a), Umanah et al. (2025b), and Mbon (2025) failed to address the above-mentioned subject matter.

This study draws on theoretical and practical knowledge to assess the importance of the study of traditional methods of enthronement of the family-head, village-head, clan-head and para-

mount ruler to students, teachers, traditional rulers, policymakers, and the public at large in Akwa Ibom State. Worthy of note is that, some members of the community have no knowledge of the kingship lineage in their family and, by virtue of being well-to-do in the community, may want to take over the traditional rulership of their village without adherence to traditional methods or native laws.

Therefore, the study could broaden the understanding of students, teachers, and the general public regarding the processes of selecting and enthroning family-heads, village-heads, clan-heads and para-mount rulers in their respective Local Government Areas. For traditional ruler aspirants, it may help them understand the selection process in accordance with the tradition, custom and convention of their communities, and to develop the exemplary leadership qualities that could lead to success — first as a family head, and progressively, as a village head, clan head, and eventually paramount ruler of their Local Government Area.

For policymakers and the general public, the study reveals that the oldest person in the family is always selected and installed as the family head (Obong Ekpuk), except where he decides to transfer leadership to a younger person from the same royal family. This study could help protect those seeking rulership through improper means, since even the customs of the communities follow the tradition stated above. It is on this basis that we often see young people losing their lives in the process of forcing their way to traditional kingship, out of ignorance of the procedures to be followed before enthronement as a village head, clan head, or paramount ruler. This study will also add to the existing literature in the field, helping to ease the problem of scarce reference material for future researchers.

The study covers the concept and practice of traditional methods of administration and enthronement of family heads, village-heads, clan-heads and para-mount rulers in Akwa Ibom State, with specific reference to Nsit Ubium Local Government Area. The study focuses on selected villages, namely Akai, Ikot Ubo, Ibomin, and Ikot Okpudo, in Nsit Ubium Local Government Area in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

The problem facing the process of selecting and enthroning credible traditional rulers has become rampant in communities today, largely as a result of money politics that undermines the conventions, traditions and the customs of the people as the basis for attaining traditional authority. It is often observed that a junior person in the family seeks to occupy the family stool, or be enthroned as village head, without passing through the traditional process of

selection, thereby resulting in apparent violation of traditional law as conferred under Cap. 134, Vol. VI, Traditional Rulers Law, Section IV, Sub-section II (1, 2, 3).

In recent times, ascension to traditional leadership has witnessed frequent government interference for political gain, at the expense of the moral values of the community. This shift affects the fundamental rights of community members, leading to a power struggle that often creates cracks in traditional administration. The struggle is frequently fuelled through the campaign and manipulation of the political elites towards the emergences of their preferred candidate as traditional rulers, and this act often resulted in misplaced priorities.

This quest of implanting traditional rulers against the people will, often degrade the process by contradicting the principle of conventional trust bestowed on traditional leadership. Hence, traditional leaders who supposed to be guided by purposeful and selfless service to the community, are rather manipulating for selfish interest aimed at benefiting from government remuneration and other entitlements. This act undermines traditional leadership's role in maintaining orderliness, law, peaceful co-existence and harmony; just ways of dispute settlement; initiating community development projects and programmes; and sustaining the tradition, culture and ancestral rights of the people in the community. The position of traditional rulers has increasingly become politically appointed office and uses by the occupants as an avenue for wealth advancement or accumulation at the detriment of the people, the office is highly politicize as we often witness traditional rulers mobilizing people to campaign openly in polling units for candidates and political party of their choice during an election. Thus, making the office of Obong no longer apolitical.

Based on the stated problem, this paper investigates the impact of government interference on traditional methods of administration and enthronement of traditional leaders (Obongs and Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State. It also examines the major causes of traditional leadership tussles in communities, as well as the idea of issuing certificate of recognition to the traditional leaders by the state government, whether it constitutes a sustenance of culture and norms in the communities.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to examine the traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State, with specific emphasis on Nsit Ubium Local Government Area.

The specific purposes of the study were to:

1. Examine how traditional methods of administration influenced the enthronement/selection of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Investigate the challenges facing traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State.
3. Highlight possible remedies to the challenges facing traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

1. How have traditional methods of administration influenced enthronement/selection of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the challenges facing traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What are the possible remedies to the challenges facing traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State?

2. Review of Related Literature

Concept of Traditional Ruler

Mbon (2025) opined that a traditional ruler or leader as one may call it, is a person enthroned with the responsibility to lead and holds the customary right of heritage for the people of the community. The traditional leadership develops as a product of the development of human society which sought for a perfect and well organized society— one with kinship structures comprising family organizations that vested power in the father as the leader. Indeed, the offshoot of the families as a unit of habitation, seeking leadership to guide the activities of the people became necessary.

The offshoot of families became a compounded unit of habitation, in turn seeking leadership to regulate the activities of the people. Therefore, tradition may be defined as the customs, beliefs, rituals, duties, norms, oaths, and culture that helps in shaping the actions and behaviours of the people in the community. It can also be viewed as the ideal practice, knowledge, belief system and the way of life of a people in a particular community as passed from one generation to another generation (Atakpa et al., 2021).

Traditional leaders are therefore the heads or custodians of the traditions and customs of the people in the community, with good legacies and succession plan transferred by the native law of the community, to carry out indispensable customary duties as specified by the deities

of the land (Mbon, 2025). As a custodians of the traditionally acceptable practices and the regulatory head charged with the responsibility to moderate on common customary businesses in the community without formal constitutional powers.

Additionally, traditional leadership can be viewed as a stool enthroned upon people with proven character and integrity, and those who have respect to the custom and tradition of the community. Hence, the installation of traditional leadership is based on the virtues of ancestral rights rather than the superior forceful power of an individual or the state, noting the throne itself is believed to have been in existence from ancient times (Mbon, 2025).

To this effect, Idris and Kawugana (2019, as cited in Mbon, 2025) conceptualized traditional authorities as the rulers of the people in the various communities before the advent of the British colonial rule in Nigeria. Ganiyu et al. (2016, as cited in Mbon, 2025) held that a traditional leadership entails the reign of a monarch or titled native ruler vested with the authority to govern over their subjects in the societal affairs.

In this sense, traditional leaders symbolize the heritage of the people by virtue of government recognition granted to them, and they represent the interest of the people in different fora, and they work in partnership with the state through the appendage of the state law. Wadama (2013, as cited in Mbon, 2025) posits that traditional rulers are leaders by virtue of heredity and proven tracks records of performance, they are nominated, selected, appointed and instilled in line with the provisions of the native laws and customs of the people of a particular community.

Similarly, Lookey et al. (2010, as cited in Mbon, 2025) define a paramount ruler as the traditional head of an ethnic unit or clan who holds the highest traditional authority in that locality and whose title is recognized as the head of traditional rulers by the local government and the state government.

In that regard, traditional rulers or leaders are recognized by the government as the custodians of the norms and values of the people within the jurisdiction of their governance. Traditional leaders are therefore heads and custodians of customs and traditions of the people in the communities, with legacies of succession plan transferred by native law in order to perform critical customary duties as provided by law (Umanah et al., 2025a; Mbon, 2025).

Concept of Traditional Administration

This study uses the terms “traditional administration” and “traditional institution” interchangeably; although traditional institutions could be defined differently by several authors depending on the time, circumstances and space.

In the opinion of Akpeekon et al. (2024, as cited in Umanah et al., 2025a), in the precolonial period, a traditional institution was conceptualize as one in which a person by virtue of ancestral practice can occupy the throne or stool of an area or community whose existence predates the introduction of British colonial rule in Nigeria. This kind of traditional institution received the power to function in the capacity of the executive, legislative and the judiciary (Umanah et al., 2025a). Traditional administration involves the process of making and implementing native laws based on the tradition and custom of the people, resulting in provision of the essential goods and services for the advancement of the welfare of the community (Ekpo, 2025). Additionally, traditional administrators, in the view of Oriji and Olali (2010, as cited in Umanah et al., 2025a), refers to the political leaders with proven integrity and track records of service, appointed and installed in line with native laws, traditions and customs of the people of the community.

Enthronement and Selection Process

Traditional administration in Akwa Ibom State is rooted primarily in the Ibibio, Annang, and Oron cultures, forming a hierarchical system — from the enthronement of the family head to the paramount ruler — based on heredity, age-grade, and consensus. The enthronement process involves rites, validation by chiefs and secret societies, and, more recently, statutory recognition via the Traditional Rulers Law 2024, which some scholars argue often creates conflict between traditional legitimacy and government appointment.

The process includes: lineage and selection, whereby Paramount Rulers and heads are usually selected from specific royal families or lineage groups within the community; the role of chiefs and elders, whereby village councils, clan heads, and kingmakers (Etuboms) are responsible for selecting new traditional rulers; cultural coronation, involving rites of passage performed by traditional priests, traditional coronation ceremonies, and the wearing of royal attire (such as the beaded cap and staff) symbolizing the assumption of traditional authority; and government recognition, whereby the state government, following traditional selection processes, issues a certificate of recognition to formalize the position — a blend of traditional legitimacy and statutory law.

The major traditional offices in Akwa Ibom State include: Obong Idung, the Village Head and primary authority at village level; Etinyin/Edidem, also known as the Paramount Ruler, who holds superior authority over a Local Government Area; and Oku Ibom Ibibio, the supreme royal head of the Ibibio nation, a position occupied on rotation by Paramount Rulers in Ibibio land. These traditional structures continue to exist alongside modern local governance, overseeing customary laws and land matters in Akwa Ibom State (AKSG, 2024, 2025).

Duties/Functions of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State

Umanah et al. (2025a) opine that traditional rulers are heads of their respective communities and they are responsible for maintenance of social order, enforcement of rules/norms, disputes resolution, and defends of the vulnerable persons against any form of oppression by the privileged class in the community by using traditional laws and councils to decide on cases. Particularly, traditional rulers are seen as guardians of the cultural heritage, beliefs and customs needed for upholding community identity and social cohesion, and for facilitating inter-group co-operation especially during crises; and by using community symbols and communication system to alert the people in the communities, and to mobilize resources for community development (Ezenwoko & Osagie, 2021, as cited in Umanah et al., 2025a).

In Akwa Ibom State, traditional administration plays a very crucial role in promoting peaceful community engagement and serving as custodians of norms and values that facilitates community development initiatives while traditional rulers act as mediators in resolving disputes in the communities (Etti & Kingsley, 2021; AKSG, 2025).

This role helps create an atmosphere of cooperation and participation, with traditional administration also acting as a medium for crime prevention and control within the community (Umanah et al., 2025a).

Traditional administration in Akwa Ibom State is anchored on hierarchical, communal, and spiritual principles involving village heads (Obong Idung), clan heads, and paramount rulers (Etinyin). Enthronement involves strict screening by traditional councils (e.g., Etuboms), ancestral rites (Ekpo/Ekpe), and recognition by the state government, emphasizing merit, lineage, and cultural authority (Etti & Kingsley, 2021; Atakpa et al., 2021).

Traditional Administration Structures in Akwa Ibom State

Traditional administration and enthronement of Obongs/Paramount Rulers, as described by Mbon (2025), include the following dimensions: structure and hierarchy, flowing from the family head (Obong Ekpuk) to the village head (Obong Idung), clan head (Obong Ikpaisong),

and Paramount Ruler (Obong Afa Esop); methods of enthronement, whereby family/village heads are primarily hereditary, based on seniority within the royal family lineage, confirmed by elders, and verified by local government authorities; cultural custodianship, whereby traditional rulers function as custodians of culture, history, and customs; dispute resolution, whereby they maintain peace and order by settling local disputes through traditional council meetings; and governmental recognition, whereby rulers, while rooted in tradition, are recognized by the state government through certificates of recognition (Mbon, 2025; Umanah et al., 2025a).

Mbon (2025) and Umanah et al. (2025a, 2025b) outline the actors and roles of traditional rulers in Akwa Ibom State as follows: Paramount Rulers serve as the highest-ranking traditional authority at the local government level, acting as intermediaries between the state government and the grassroots; the system is spearheaded by the Obong Ikpaisong (Priest-King) of the autonomous community, who serves as the spiritual and political head; traditional law enforcement agents include traditional secret cults, such as Ekpo and Ekpe, which serve as security and governance mechanisms for managing public order (Atakpa et al., 2021); conflict and dispute resolution, particularly regarding land, is mediated by chiefs and elders, with methods such as Mbiam (oath-taking) used as traditional tools to ensure justice and adjudicate disputes (Atakpa et al., 2021); and social control techniques, such as Ukang (oracle consultation) and other cultural norms, are still used to maintain morality and curb crime in the community. Traditional rulers act as mediators amongst the government and the grassroots people, playing a key role in supporting government initiatives such as the state's security and land mapping efforts (Atakpa et al., 2021). In connection with the above, the Governor of Akwa Ibom State has final authority in recognizing traditional rulers and granting them certificates.

Enthronement and Administration Structure

Selection is generally governed by the traditions of the community, usually through the recommendation of the royal family or the traditional council, rather than direct popular election. Clan heads and paramount rulers are vested with the power to select from a pool of eligible family heads, usually involving community consensus and recognition of their status by the state governor. Traditional rites (e.g., the use of elephant tusks or tails) are often employed to signify authority and invoke ancestral blessing.

Administration and legitimacy rely heavily on consensus, the council of elders, and secret societies such as Ekpe/Ekpo to maintain order. In Akwa Ibom State, the 2024 amendment to the traditional rulers' law strengthened the Akwa Ibom State Supreme Council of Traditional Rulers by establishing rotational leadership: Third Amendment Law provides that the Office of the President-General of the Traditional Council should rotate among the major ethnic groups in the state. It also stipulates the powers and functions of the Oku Ibom Ibibio as a supreme royal title, serving as head of the Ibibio nation's traditional council (AKSG, 2024, 2025).

Functions of the Family Head to the Paramount Ruler

Drawing from traditional law and personal interactions with traditional rulers in selected villages in Nsit Ubium Local Government Area, it was deduced that a family head (Obong Ekpuk) is a person that takes charge of the family, supervises and manages the affairs of a collective body of persons residing together as a family. Obong Ekpuk upholds cultural values in the family, presides over traditional ceremonies affecting the family, and serves as a coordinating force within it. The objective of the family head is to promote good relationships among members. Family heads help disseminate information from the village council or government to the people — for example, on environmental sanitation, general immunization, traditional ceremonies, and the sharing of family farmland.

Similarly, the functions of the village head include: providing leadership in accordance with the tradition and custom of the village and acting as an arbiter of civil disputes voluntarily referred to him by affected parties; serving as a rallying force in organizing community projects, such as coordinating members to conduct village sanitation; upholding the tradition of the people and working for their cultural advancement; promoting good relationships between his people and neighbouring villages; ensuring that village roads and water supply sources are maintained in good condition; arbitrating in social welfare matters voluntarily; giving support and cooperation to revenue-collecting agencies to ensure that rates, development levies, and other dues are promptly collected and paid to government; and working with family heads to share family properties among members, such as farmlands, palm fruit plantations, and similar assets.

The functions of the clan head include: presiding over the clan council of chiefs; presiding over traditional matters brought before him by members of his clan; upholding the culture of

the clan; presiding over traditional ceremonies affecting the clan; and serving as a rallying force in organizing community projects affecting the clan.

Lastly, the functions of the paramount ruler include: serving as president of the Traditional Rulers Council (TRC) and presiding over TRC meetings in the local government area; arbitrating matters brought before him in his local government area; presiding over the selection of newly elected clan heads and recommending them to the governor for a certificate of recognition; and representing the local government's tradition at the state Council of Chiefs.

Additionally, under the Akwa Ibom State amended Traditional Rulers' law, Cap. 155, emphasis is placed on the importance of traditional rulers supporting the state's efforts in maintenance of peace and unity in the state.

The amended law established rotational leadership of the president general among the three major ethnic groups in the state. Some scholars views this development as a significant step towards addressing the lingering problem that causes ethnic tensions and divisions in traditional administration of the state, with the tendency of fostering unity across Akwa Ibom (AKSG, 2025).

It is worth noting that, the traditional administrative system in Akwa Ibom State rests on hierarchical, kinship-based structure (village head, clan head, paramount ruler) that blends ancestral customs with modern state laws, particularly the Traditional Rulers (Third Amendment) Law 2023. Enthronement involves strict cultural rites and governmental recognition, with the highest authority, the Oku Ibom Ibibio, leading a rotating Supreme Council of Traditional Rulers (AKSG, 2025).

The major challenges of traditional administration and enthronement in Akwa Ibom State include:

- i. **Political interference:** The Traditional Rulers (Amendment) Law 2023/2024 has caused contention, particularly regarding rotation of the Oku Ibom Ibibio stool (supreme head of the Ibibio) intended to limit political interference. Frequent political interference affects the selection process negatively. Traditional methods of enthronement in Akwa Ibom State, which emphasize hereditary succession and strict customary rites, currently face significant disruption from state government interference, political manoeuvring, and legal amendments. Reforms such as the Traditional Rulers (Third Amendment) Law of 2024 introduce rotational leadership

among the major ethnic groups (Ibibio, Annang, and Oron), reducing reliance on traditional kingmakers and increasing the governor's power in appointing the President-General of the Traditional Rulers Council (AKSG, 2025).

- ii. **Conflict of interest:** There is often lingering tension between “authentic” traditional rulers recognized by communities and “warrant chiefs” or state-appointed leaders holding office.
- iii. **Adaptation:** While retaining traditional roles, institutions must adapt to a changing technological world by utilizing technology for meetings and balancing traditional roles with modern democratic practice.

In summary, the system represents a mix of deep-rooted, ancestral selection methods (focused on lineage and consensus) and formal, government-driven appointments, which occasionally create challenges to the legitimacy of rulers.

Umanah et al. (2025b) and AKSG (2025) assess the effects of traditional methods compared with modern reforms, noting: (1) shifting authority — while traditionally the Obong (king) or Paramount Ruler is selected by family heads and community elders, the 2024 Amendment empowers the state government to oversee the selection process, which may hinder the transparency of the enthronement process; (2) political interference — traditional institutions are now entangled with political interests, leading to disputes, lawsuits, and petitions when customary processes clash with the governor's preferences; (3) rotational leadership — the amendment enforces rotation of the position/office of the President General of the Supreme Council of Traditional Rulers in the state among major ethnic groups in order to ensure equity among ethnic groups, replacing a previous system seen by some as disproportionately empowering one ethnic group (Ibibio); (4) legitimacy and conflict — disputes arise when traditionalists feel that the state's bureaucratic approach to selecting rulers violates traditional laws, resulting in “divide-and-rule” scenarios (Umanah et al., 2025b); (5) conflict resolution — traditional rulers have been tasked with supporting state peace initiatives, directly linking their legitimacy to their effectiveness in maintaining order and promoting the government's agenda (AKSG, 2025); (6) reforms and controversy — the amendment of the traditional rulers' law has faced controversy, with some groups arguing that it creates an imbalance of power among ethnic groups; and (7) role definition — there is often tension between the

traditional roles of rulers as independent leaders and their status as appointees or beneficiaries of the state government (Umanah et al., 2025b).

In light of the above, while traditional methods hold deep cultural significance, they are being significantly adapted, or in some cases overwritten, by state laws that, while promoting political inclusivity, sometimes create conflict and diminish the independent power of local traditional structures. This structure seeks to maintain peace, unity, and developmental progress at the local level while providing a platform for the state government to engage with rural communities (AKSG, 2024, 2025).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Integrated Theory of Peace (ITP) propounded by Danesh, H.B in the early 2000s. The theory posits that peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of positive conditions that promotes people's well-being and social justice.

The ITP highlights the role of world views in shaping our understanding/experience of peace. The theory advocates a world view of inclusive peace that can be achieved through peace education among individuals striving for inner peace, and peaceful co-existence amongst groups in the community and in the state.

Adopting the integrated theory of peace provides the work with a framework for understanding the complex nature of peace as a phenomenon which requires a holistic approach to understand that peace is not a singular concept but it manifest across various aspects of human lives, including intra-personal, inter-personal, inter-group, international, and global conflict management (Mnookin 1998, as cited in Mbon, 2025). The basic tenet of the ITP reveals that a society's worldview about peace is shaped by many factors including culture, family, history, religion and political and economic factors, and these significantly affects the perception of the community peace and interactions with others.

The Integrated Theory of Peace is relevant to this paper because it integrates a peaceful disposition into the enthronement process, showing that achieving positive peace requires strict adherence to generally acceptable principles, a peaceful mindset, educational advancement, employment, gender equality, and religious tolerance in the face of disputes and conflict that disrupt peaceful coexistence in the community. The ITP thus helps in curtailing the root causes of traditional leadership tussles, conflict, and crime in the community, offering a more effective means of promoting harmony than a negative-peace concept geared solely toward zero crime. The theory stipulates the roles of traditional administrators to include;

settlement of disputes through reconciliation, mediation, peace-building and initiating community development projects in the state.

The ITP also illustrates a significant avenue through which traditional rulers could best strategize mediation to forestall impending dangers by reconciling aggrieved people to continue working together for the progress of the community. As posits by the theory, initiating peace requires that all parties or interest groups are protected, and they are offered opportunities to participate in the decision making process regarding the community development projects and programmes. This allows every group the opportunity to have a sense of belonging concerning matters affecting their communities, and ensuring that in implementing the decisions or policies made, it does not face resistance by the people attitudes pointing to the fact that they were all involved in the negotiation and policy formulation process.

2.3 Empirical Studies

Umanah et al. (2025a) examined traditional administration and its role in crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State, using the theoretical exposition of the Integrated Theory of Peace. The study adopted mixed research design with sample size of 400 respondents determined through Taro Yamane formula. Data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 significance level. The study found that traditional administration significantly influences crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State. It recommended that the government of Akwa Ibom State

should enact appropriate laws to empower traditional rulers in crime prevention.

Mbon (2025) examined the effect of government interference on traditional leadership and community development in Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted survey research method alongside with cluster and stratified sampling techniques to obtain data from three major ethnic groups in Akwa Ibom. Hypotheses formulated were tested and analyzed using simple regression statistical tool. Findings reveal that the issuance of certificate of recognition to traditional leaders by governments impedes the substance of culture and norms in the communities, and that payment of remuneration to traditional leaders generates leadership tussles in communities. The paper recommended that government prohibits the issuance of certificate of recognition to traditional leaders and revert to support ancestral principles for selecting traditional leaders, in order to sustain cultural heritage and enhance community development in the state.

Umanah et al. (2025b) investigated traditional administration and land dispute resolution in Akwa Ibom State. One objective and one hypothesis were stated to guide the study. The paper adopted Integrated Theory of Peace and a mixed research design with sample size of 400 respondents determined through Taro Yamane formula. Data were analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 significance level. The study finding reveals that traditional administration significantly influenced land dispute resolution in Akwa Ibom State, and it recommended among other things that government of Akwa Ibom State should ensure that traditional rulers are properly trained in land survey and map reading, to effectively discharge their functions on land dispute related matters in the communities.

Gap in Literature

The study identified that no previous study had been conducted on traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State. It therefore became necessary to embark on this study to close the gap in the literature, since previous studies by Atakpa et al. (2021), Umanah et al. (2025a), Umanah et al. (2025b), and Mbon (2025) failed to address the above-mentioned subject matter.

3. Methods and Materials

The study adopts a mixed research design with descriptive research design employed to explain the key variables under study and the cause-effect relationship among variables. The study investigated the methods of administration and enthronement of the family-head, village-head, clan-head and para-mount ruler. It employed both adaptive and bottom-up approaches, with both primary and secondary data collected. A total of four villages were selected, and 20 respondents were engaged for interactions, comprising family-heads, village-heads, clan-heads and para-mount ruler in Nsit Ubium LGA. The twenty respondents were drawn five per village, with four family heads and one village head per village.

The traditional methods of administration and enthronement of family heads, village heads, clan heads, and the paramount rulers were discussed contextually. Major findings showed that there was an established method of administering the villages and laid-down procedures for selecting family heads, village heads, clan heads, and the paramount ruler among communities in Nsit Ubium Local Government Area, and that these methods of administration were governed by traditional laws binding the village head in his

administration, with village heads vested with certain powers to administer their villages traditionally.

4. Major Findings/Discussion

The study's major findings reveals:

1. There is a significant direct influence between traditional methods of administration and enthronement/selection of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, Akwa Ibom State.
2. Non-adherence to traditional laws and frequent political interference impact negatively on traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, Akwa Ibom State.
3. Strict compliance with laws, conventions, customs, and traditions of the people positively influences traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, Akwa Ibom State.

Finding one shows that there is a significant direct influence between traditional methods of administration and enthronement/selection of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, Akwa Ibom State. The finding is consistent with the study previously conducted by Umanah et al. (2025a), which examined traditional administration and its role in crime prevention in Akwa Ibom State, and found that traditional administration significantly influences traditional methods of administration and enthronement, particularly with regard to crime prevention, in Akwa Ibom State. The paper recommended that the government of Akwa Ibom State should enact appropriate laws to empower traditional rulers in crime prevention.

Finding two shows that non-adherence to traditional laws and frequent political interference impact negatively on traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State, a finding supported by Mbon (2025), who examined the effect of government interference on traditional leadership and community development in Akwa Ibom State, and found that the issuance of certificate of recognition to traditional leaders by governments without following traditional methods of administration impedes the substance of culture and norms in the communities, thus generating leadership tussles in communities. The paper recommended that government should prohibit the issuance of certificate of recognition to traditional leaders and revert to support ancestral principles for selecting traditional leaders, in accordance with cultural heritage to enhance community

development in the state. For instance, in Ikot Obitong, a wealthy member of the community sought to absorb the functions of the village head through money politics.

However, where a vacancy occurs in the headship of a family, village, or clan — whether through the death of the occupant of the stool — the family, village, or clan shall, in accordance with traditional ruling law, select a qualified candidate to fill the vacant stool. The family head presents such a person to the village council for recognition to fill the vacant post of family head. Where the vacancy is for village head, the family heads come together to select a qualified candidate from among the lineage, presenting the candidate to the clan head for further presentation to the paramount ruler, who forwards it to the Local Government TRC for recognition. If the family heads (Mbong Ekpuk), in the process of selecting a village head, fail to reach an acceptable choice, or the village heads fail to reach a majority in selecting a clan head, the council itself shall vote for candidates, and the candidate with a majority of votes shall be recommended, through the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, to the state Governor for recognition as village head or clan head. Where the family heads have a dispute during the selection of a village head, the TRC will intervene and conduct an election at the local government's TRC. Similarly, if village heads have a dispute in selecting their clan head, the state TRC will intervene through the office of the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, via an election.

Finding three revealed that strict compliance with laws, conventions, customs, and traditions of the people positively influences traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State, aligning with studies previously conducted by Atakpa et al. (2021) and Umanah et al. (2025a), which showed that traditional leadership develops as a product of the emergence of the human society which sought for a perfect and well organized community. Hence, the offshoot of families became a unit of habitation that seek leadership for good governance in the communities. Therefore, tradition comprises the beliefs, rituals, customs, values, convention and culture that helps to shape the attitudes or behaviours of a particular community. It entails the ideal practices, knowledge and the way of life of the people transmitted from one generation to another in a given community or ethnic group.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study investigated traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Akwa Ibom State. The study's findings revealed that there is a significant direct influence between traditional methods of administration and enthronement/selection of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, Akwa Ibom State; that non-adherence to traditional laws and frequent political interference impact negatively on traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, Akwa Ibom State; and that strict compliance with laws, conventions, customs, and traditions of the people positively influences traditional methods of administration and enthronement of Obongs' (Paramount Rulers) in Nsit Ubium, Akwa Ibom State.

The research concluded that, in the enthronement of family heads, the oldest person among family members should be enthroned as family head. It is the family head who selects the village head, while the village head selects the clan head from among its members, and the clan heads select the paramount ruler from among its members.

Deducing from the study findings, the study made the following recommendations:

1. There is a need to strictly adhere to the traditional processes, culture, norms, traditional laws, and conventions of the people of the communities in selecting Obongs' or paramount rulers in Nsit Ubium, Akwa Ibom State.
2. Government interference with the traditional methods of selection and enthronement of Obongs' and paramount rulers should be curtailed, since the entire process of traditional enthronement is founded on ancestral principles, hence, it should be maintained by the people. Thus, the state government's role in issuing certificates of recognition to traditional rulers should consider ancestral principles/practices for the better selection of traditional leaders that could sustain cultural heritage and foster community development in the state.
3. The Akwa Ibom State government should ensure that the most senior person from the royal family is selected to become Obong or paramount ruler, and should enact appropriate laws to empower traditional rulers with the right to selection and enthronement based on custom and tradition, in order to limit power tussles. Leaders with good potential, competence, and wider acceptability should be selected and enthroned based on the tradition and convention of the people.

Article Publication Details

This article is published in the **International Journal of Multidisciplinary Department**, ISSN 3108-2718 (Online). In Volume 2 (2026), Issue 4 July-Aug)

The journal is published and managed by **IJRGP**.

Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank the editors and the reviewers for their valuable suggestions on this paper.

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